PIEDMONT WAY & THE BERKELEY PROPERTY TRACT
(Piedmont Avenue)
East of College Avenue between Dwight Way & U.C. Memorial Stadium
Berkeley
Alameda County
California

HALS CA-2
*CA-2*

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

ADDENDUM TO:
PIEDMONT WAY & THE BERKELEY PROPERTY TRACT
(Piedmont Avenue)
East of College Avenue between Dwight Way & U.C. Memorial Stadium
Berkeley
Alameda County
California

HALS CA-2
*CA-2*

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

**HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY**

**PIEDMONT WAY & THE BERKELEY PROPERTY TRACT**

**HALS NO. CA-2**

Location: East of College Avenue between Dwight Way & University of California Memorial Stadium
Berkeley, Alameda County, California
Lat: 37.86776 Long: -122.25189

Significance: The design of Piedmont Avenue and the adjacent University of California campus and residential tract are significant for several reasons. Olmsted was in California at a crucial time in his career. He had recently completed the design for Central Park in New York City with Calvert Vaux, he had left the US Sanitary Commission, and he was seeking to explore his future, possibly leaving the field of landscape design. The opportunity to manage a gold mining operation seemed to promise a new opportunity. Vaux was asking him to return to New York and work on Prospect Park in Brooklyn. But his design work and residence in the California gold country at the Mariposa Estate helped him in clarifying his thinking and bringing him to the conclusion that he would continue his career in landscape design.

The design work that he did for the Berkeley Property Tract, i.e., the design of the campus, residential area, and roadways curved to the topography, is significant in its own right. The alignment of the roads, the shape of the residential blocks, the relationship of the private blocks to each other, and the opportunities for healthful views and walking outings are all representative of Olmsted's civic and design principles. (Hallinan: 2004, 28) The written Olmsted report to the Trustees accompanying his design provides his vision for the property. These significant design details and ideas would go on to inform his subsequent work in New York. This is particularly important in his most well known suburban developments, Riverside, Illinois and Druid Hills, Georgia.

The ideas of broad roadways, curved to the terrain, separated or controlled access roads, curved lot lines, views and vistas and tree-lined spaces, including parks, and recreational areas were new to the thinking of town planning. He was no doubt familiar with Llewellyn Park, laid out by Alexander Jackson Davis or possibly even Glendale, Ohio (1851) also laid out with a curving pattern of streets shaped to the topography as well as with London examples by John Nash and James Pennethorn.

Many of the cities in Olmsted's east coast experience had been laid out on the grid pattern with simple square open spaces, such as New Haven, where he attended Yale for a period. He lived in San Francisco when he first came to California and was thus very familiar with a rigid grid street pattern overlaid on the very hilly terrain. He broke from such molds to establish new models designed to enhance the lives of the residents of these newly planned communities.

History: 1. Date(s) of establishment:

1864 The Trustees of the College of California, a small private school located in Oakland, purchased land north of Oakland in an area near Strawberry Creek. The Trustees intended to move the College from Oakland to a site removed from the influences of the city.

1865 The Trustees commission Frederick Law Olmsted to draw up plans for the College site, including a residential tract known as the Berkeley Property Tract. The Trustees intended to fund the College through the sale of the residential lots adjacent to the College site. Olmsted proposes a landscape plan for the college and Piedmont Way as a residential street that terminates at the college grounds. (See 1865 Olmsted Map)

1867 The Trustees dissolve the College and agree to merge with the newly constituted state institution, the California College of Agriculture, Mining and Mechanical Arts to form the University of California.

1868 William F. Boardman, engineer for Alameda County, submits a map of the campus and the Berkeley Property Tract to the County Recorder's Office. The map is based on the original map signed by Olmsted and drawn by his engineer/surveyor Edward Miller, which was thought to be lost. (See 1868 Boardman Map)

1868-78 The sale of the lots of the Berkeley Property Tract leads to the construction of several large, architect-designed houses on large lots with landscaped grounds. Piedmont Way is established as an unpaved carriage way with informal medians and walkways linking the houses to the University campus.

1878 The Trustees of the University of California deed Piedmont Way to the newly incorporated Town of Berkeley.

1890 The Town of Berkeley macadamizes Piedmont Way and formalizes the roadway with sidewalks, gutters, drainage and plantings along the street, including the addition of walnut trees.

1900 The Town of Berkeley changes the name of Piedmont Way to Piedmont Avenue to conform to the street naming convention of the town of Berkeley. Charles Loyal Huggins, Berkeley Town Engineer proposes improvements to the street. (See Huggins Map) The surface of the street is graded, re-paved and improved with the addition of redefined street medians (labeled parks by Huggins) and replacement of the vegetation in the right of way, including the removal of the walnut trees.

1908-1909 Additional stately, architect-designed house are constructed on the vacant lots on both sides of the street. (See photos CA 2-17 and CA 2-22) This trend continues the intent of the Olmsted concept for the street as an up-scale residential district to enhance the cultural and natural context of the University. The Simmons Property Tract at the north end of the street is subdivided into lots and the dead-end Piedmont Place is established.

1923 The California Memorial Stadium is constructed at the north end of Piedmont Avenue. Several historic houses are demolished or relocated to make way for the new structure. The structure changes the formerly residential only character of the street and initiates additional traffic and pedestrian uses. A portion of Strawberry Creek is culverted underground to accommodate the new structure. By this time also new fraternity and sorority houses are constructed or existing houses are converted to fraternity/sorority houses along the length of Piedmont Avenue. (See photos CA 2-11 and CA 2-19)

1930 The International House, a high rise student residential facility, is constructed near the California Memorial Stadium. Historic residential buildings are demolished or moved for the new building, which is of a larger scale than the nearby residential buildings. (See photo CA 2-31)

1942-47 Piedmont Avenue at the north end is rerouted to connect to Gayley Road. The Stadium arc access road is removed along with Piedmont Place. The residential buildings on Piedmont Place are demolished or moved nearby to serve University functions. This change makes Piedmont Avenue the principle new north-south road through the campus and brings additional traffic to the street.

1950 The Boalt School of Law Simon Hall, a dormitory for students and a high rise building of Modern design, is constructed near Piedmont Avenue further eroding the residential character at the north end of the street.

2. Landscape architect, designer, shaper, creator:

Frederick Law Olmsted (1822-1903) is regarded by many as the founder of the landscape architecture profession in the United States. Olmsted is best known for his collaboration with architect Calvert Vaux on the design of Central Park (1858) in New York City, their earliest joint work. Olmsted and Vaux were personal friends. Vaux carried on the design precepts of Andrew Jackson Downing (1821-1852) after working in Downing's office. Olmsted was influenced by the British Picturesque style of landscape design and by the development of English public parks, particularly Paxton's Birkenhead Park (1847) in Liverpool.

Olmsted came to California in 1863 to supervise the gold mining operation at the Mariposa Estate at Bear Valley. While in California he produced the plans for Mountain View Cemetery, Oakland (1863); the design for the campus and residential tract for the newly formed University of California (1865); and his report on the Mariposa Grove (1865) at Yosemite Valley, then a California state park. His time in California was significant because he began integrating the ideas and influences that he had experienced up to that time.

After returning to New York Olmsted and Vaux designed Prospect Park (1868-73) in Brooklyn and planned the community of Riverside (1868) near Chicago. Each project was marked by innovation in the design and planning process that had been refined from his earlier works. He went on to produce designs for the US Capitol Grounds (1874), and developed park systems for Boston, Massachusetts and Louisville, Kentucky. With Vaux, he designed the Niagara Falls Reservation. He also produced the innovative landscape design for the campus of Stanford University, Palo Alto, California (1886). He went on to design the landscape plan for the George Washington Vanderbilt estate, Biltmore, in Asheville, North Carolina.

Although he continued to work on Biltmore, his last large project was the site selection, planning and design of the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago held in 1893. Working with the classically inspired buildings of McKim, Mead, and White, Daniel Burnham and others, he produced a site design plan that took advantage of the relatively swampy Jackson Park site and made superb use of

both the new Beaux Arts building design and the traditional Picturesque Canals that transported the many thousands of visitors around the Fair.

Olmsted was a prolific writer throughout his career and this helped to codify and spread the ideas he espoused. These ideas include the importance of recreation in nature, rationally designed communities with well designed roadways and landscape treatments that provided or enhanced views and vistas. With Calvert Vaux and Andrew Jackson Downing, Olmsted is recognized today as a founder of the landscape architecture profession in the United States.

Charles Loyal Huggins (1861-1946?) was the Berkeley Town Engineer at the turn of the twentieth century. Before working in Berkeley he apparently worked on other large scale engineering projects, including the Locks at Sault Ste Marie, Michigan. He was born in Minnesota, the son of Presbyterian missionaries to the Indians. He was taken with his younger brother to California to be raised by a maternal aunt after the death of his father in an Indian uprising. He was raised in the San Francisco Bay area and graduated from the University of California in 1884 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Civil Engineering. While still in school he designed the plan and specifications for a bridge over Strawberry Creek on the campus. It was known as Huggins Bridge until it was later enhanced and became the portal known as Sather Gate, a campus landmark. Huggins worked with a fellow University of California graduate, Duncan McDuffie in laying out the new areas of settlement in the growing city particularly in the hill areas, which required the knowledge of grading, drainage, and placement of roadways. He later joined the real estate development firm of Mason-McDuffie and laid out additional areas of settlement in the city, such as Claremont Court, that included a pathway system still in existence. He continued to live in the city after his retirement from a 58 year career in civil engineering.

3. Original and subsequent owners, occupants:

In 1864 the Trustees of the College of California purchased the land for its new campus site including a section known as the Berkeley Property Tract. They intended the land to become the campus of the college and an area of college related residential settlement near the campus. Frederick Law Olmsted's plan for Piedmont Way was intended to provide access to the residential lots that were adjacent to the campus and to the newly forming Town of Berkeley. The land remained in the ownership of the College of California trustees until 1867, when the trustees voted to dissolve the College and merge it with the newly formed California College of Agriculture, Mining and Mechanical Arts to form the

University of California. The trustees of the University retained ownership until 1878 when they deeded ownership of Piedmont Way to the Town of Berkeley. The City of Berkeley has remained as the owner to the present time.

4. Periods of Development

a. Original plans and construction:

Piedmont Avenue occupies a portion of the former cattle ranch of Luis Maria Peralta. Prior to development, the site had a few scattered farm buildings but was generally a large open plain. Due to both climate and grazing it was a barren, almost treeless expanse. Dry and brown during the rainless summer season it turned green during the seasonal winter rains. Olmsted was not enamored of this type of California landscape. However, the Trustees of the College of California had purchased the land for the site of the college. Piedmont Way, according to the Olmsted design, was a divided carriage path with walkways that curved according the hillside topography. It was the chief roadway that connected the college campus, the flanking residential lots, and the grid patterned lots that became the City of Berkeley, which developed south and west of the campus. Olmsted's plan envisioned a broad tree-lined roadway flanked by tree and garden-filled residential lots that would recall the sylvan bowers of the cities that he was familiar with in the eastern United States. He foresaw a shady roadway that would serve as the gateway to campus so that the students would benefit from the contact with nature while pursuing their academic studies. The houses on the eastern side of the roadway would have grand views of San Francisco Bay and the Golden Gate. While Olmsted was not directly involved in further planning and development efforts, his vision slowly came to be realized as the college sold off the residential lots, houses were constructed, and the university began to construct academic buildings.

The roadway was in this stage of continuous development when the trustees deeded it to the City of Berkeley in 1878. At that time there were fewer than a dozen houses constructed. When the city received ownership it continued to encourage this format of development.

Many of the larger lots were subdivided and more houses were constructed over time. In 1890 the city macadamized the roadway and formalized the roadway with the installation of median strips, curbs and sidewalks, and street tree plantings. (See photos CA 2-7, CA 2-8 and CA 2-12) It should be noted that the use of median strips is shown in the earliest of the Olmsted drawings for the

college campus and Piedmont Way. In spite of the fact that the later design overlays have obscured Olmsted's original campus plan, the Mining Circle and the Golden Gate axis, the Strawberry Creek campus course and the Piedmont Avenue roadway continue to represent the most significant part of Olmsted's vision for the area.

b. Changes and additions:

The character of Piedmont Avenue has changed over time. The original alignment, divided roadway with medians and numerous historic residential building still remain. On the east and west side of the street rhyolite stone and brick walls were added at some of the property edges. The brick walls are located in front of the residences at 2302, 2307 and 2421 Piedmont (See photos CA 2-23 and CA 2-27), while rhyolite stone walls are in front of the residences at 2325, 2395 and 2421 Piedmont (See photo CA 2-8). There is a rhyolite stone retaining wall at the grade change in front of the Stadium at the north end of the street (See photo CA 2-38).

The increased traffic and large incompatible buildings at the north end of the road have eroded the former bucolic residential nature of the street. The alteration of the historic facades of some of the former residences has also contributed to the character erosion. The tree canopy, shown in a 1940 aerial photograph, indicates moderate areas of canopy near the stadium at the north end of the street and a significant area of canopy at the southern end of the street near the intersections of Haste Street and Channing Way. There is also intermittent canopy along the other sections of the street. A 2006 aerial photograph show that there is significant canopy near the stadium but the rest of the canopy along Piedmont Avenue and the adjacent side streets has been reduced. This change in canopy has also had a negative effect on the tree lined feel of the street, as proposed by Olmsted.

Description: A. Landscape Character

The landscape is characterized by the sequence of roadway with center median, the curbside planting strip next to the sidewalk, which is at the residential lot lines. There are some trees in the median but for the most part there is sparse vegetation. The residential buildings that line the roadway vary in size, lot setback, and historic character. There are large trees on the lots and in the median, particularly in the northern most sections. The front lots of the houses vary in the amount of vegetation.

B. Character Defining Features

1. Natural Features

a. Topography:

The topography of the street slopes down from the higher side on the east to the west so that the right of way is significantly higher on the east than on the west. The street gradually rises in elevation from the lower southern portion to the higher northern portion. (See photo CA 2-16)

b. Vegetation:

There are some hedges along the property lines but much of the shrub layer has been lost. There are large redwood trees and maples in the vicinity of the Stadium and a few in the median strips. (See photo CA 2-37)

2. Spatial organization:

The large scale lots along the street have given way to much smaller lots so that the buildings are similar in distribution and configuration to the adjacent residential streets. Some of the setbacks from the street for the historic residences have been altered with new construction in front of the historic house.

a. Land patterns:

The original plan for the residential areas adjacent to Piedmont Way shows large lots with curving boundary lines. Over time the larger lots were subdivided and new east-west streets were cut through. By 1911 the number of houses constructed was almost equal to the number of lots. (Hallinan, 2004, 34) Houses, including sorority and fraternity houses, were constructed on these smaller lots but were still in keeping with the idea of architect-designed houses. (See photos CA 2-11 and CA 2-22) The larger lots still retained their curved boundaries. With the smaller lots the setbacks changed as houses were built closer to the front lot line. These changes greatly increased the density of the neighborhood flanking Piedmont Avenue.

b. Circulation:

When Olmsted laid out Piedmont Way he proposed a divided carriage way that followed the curve of the hills and curvilinear sidewalks for healthful outings. The road presently still follows this original concept. The eastern portion has

one-way traffic going north while the lower roadway to the west has traffic going south (See photo CA 2-2). There are several cross streets which are shown in the original map. There is a traffic roundabout at the intersection of Piedmont Avenue and Channing Way (See photo CA 2-15). These features, envisioned by Olmsted, were formalized by Huggins when the town of Berkeley confirmed the design.

c. Views and vistas:

When the street was first laid out, the lots on the eastern side of the street commanded views of San Francisco Bay and the Golden Gate. Because of the residential development to the west and the growth of trees on these lots, the view has been compromised except where the east-west roadways now offer narrow glimpses of the Bay and the Golden Gate Bridge.

d. Small scale elements:

Historic photographs show that the median strips were planted with both trees and shrubs. There were hedges separating the lot lines. Many of these elements have been lost or altered, although some hedges remain. Current planning calls for the reestablishment of these lost elements.

e. Archeological sites:

Originally, the land was settled by the Ohlone Indians. There may have been scattered usage sites in the area of Piedmont Way, but no research in the area was undertaken before the roadway and the houses were constructed. At the time of the construction of the stadium there were known Indian sites in the area at the north end of Piedmont Avenue. These identified sites were shell middens and burial sites. None of these sites are near the Piedmont Avenue roadway.

Sources:

Chandler, Ursula, City Planning 290E Midterm Case Study, Piedmont Way, Berkeley, California, unpublished student paper, University of California, Berkeley, California, no date.

Hallinan, Wendy, *Frederick Law Olmsted's First Residential District: The Significance of the Berkeley Property* , unpublished master's thesis submitted for the degree of Master of Arts, Archaeology and Heritage, School of Archaeology and Ancient History, University of Leicester, Leicester, England, 2004. (University reference number 273)

McGuire, Diane Kostal, "Early Site Planning on the West Coast: Frederick Law Olmsted's Plan for Stanford University," *Landscape Architecture*, Vol. XLVII, No.2, January, 1957, pp. 344-349.

Olmsted, Frederick Law, *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted, Volume V, The California Frontier*, Victoria Post Ranney, Ed., The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London, 1990.

Page & Turnbull, PGA design, Inc., Piedmont Avenue Landscape, Berkeley, California, Final Historic Landscape Report, planning document for the University of California, Berkeley, California, January, 2006.

PGA design Landscape Architects, Piedmont Avenue/Way Historic Landscape Analysis and Rehabilitation Plan, planning document for the Friends of Piedmont Way, May 22, 2007.

Reps, John W., *Town Planning In Frontier America*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1969.

Rybczynski, Witold. *A Clearing in the Distance, Frederick Law Olmsted and America in the Nineteenth Century*, Scribner Publishing, New York, New York, 1999.

Vernon, Noel, and May, Vonn Marie, "Historical Significance" Landscape Heritage Plan, University of California, Berkeley, landscape planning document for the University of California, Berkeley, 2004, http://www.cp.berkeley.edu/thp/about/index.html.

Historian: Michael Crowe, August 24, 2009

Project Information: The documentation of Piedmont Way was undertaken partially under the aegis of a National Trust for Historic Preservation Grant and partially on a pro-bono basis by the Northern California Chapter of the Historic American Landscapes Survey. The Project Leaders were Chris Pattillo and Cathy Garrett, Principals of PGAdesign and HALS Northern California Chapter co-chairs. These drawings were completed in 2006 by Karen Krolewski, Landscape Architect of PGAdesign. The project was initiated by Michael Kelly and Fredrica Drotos, Directors, Friends of Piedmont Way. The Project Historian was Michael Crowe. The Project Editors were Cathy Garrett, Noel Vernon, Fredrica Drotos and Michael Kelly. The large-format photography was initiated by Michael Kelly and Fredrica

Drotos and completed by Brian Grogan and generously supported by Paul Dolinsky, Chief of HALS, National Park Service.